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EDITORIALS.

THE protracted ill health of Major J. W. Powell has led to his resignation of the office of Director of the United States Geological Survey, and to appointment, with his hearty endorsement, of Professor Charles D. Walcott who has had charge of much of the executive work of the Survey for the past year or more. Although Major Powell has suffered much from other forms of ill health for several years, the immediate cause of his resignation, we understand, was a renewal of trouble from his amputated arm, which had reached a stage requiring re-amputation. As is well known, Major Powell lost his right arm on the evening of the first day of battle at Shiloh, while he was gallantly trying to hold his battery's position till night should come to the relief of the sorely pressed army. We are glad to learn that the re-amputation has already been successfully performed, and that there is every prospect of a speedy recovery. The probability of a measurable restoration to health has been regarded sufficient to warrant Major Powell in retaining the less exacting directorship of the Bureau of Ethnology, and to give encouragement that he may be able to finish the important ethnological studies upon which he has been engaged for several years. It is earnestly to be hoped that this may be realized, and that he may be permitted to add to his record as an executive the more distinctively scientific fruits of a very original and philosophical mind.

The appointment of Mr. Walcott meets with the hearty concurrence of his associates, and will be approved, we are sure, by scientific men generally. Though a comparatively young man, he has shown both investigative and executive ability of an unusual order and possesses in high degree the personal qualities which the position requires.

Major Powell's administration has been a very notable one, and will doubtless stand forth even more distinctively as we recede from it in time and see it in perspective when its greater outlines will be better defined and its details will fall into their places as parts of the whole. From a comparatively small corps of workers, with an inadequate appropriation, trammelled by legislative restrictions and uncertainties, and embarrassed by untoward inheritances from three inharmonious territorial surveys, the organization has grown to be perhaps the largest and most productive of official geological surveys. Its very strength has indeed been an occasion of criticism on the part of some who have conceived themselves to be unfavorably affected by its great influence.

One of the most notable characteristics of the administration has been the large consideration given to the differentiation of investigative work. To a degree perhaps never before equaled in governmental work facilities have been afforded for the careful and broad investigation of special subjects of a fundamental nature. A portion of the results of these studies have appeared in the special papers of the annual reports, in the monographs, and in the correlation papers, but a considerable portion are yet to be issued.

Externally, perhaps the most conspicuous feature of Major Powell's administration has been the great prominence given to topographic work. If this work be conceived as subserving no other function than that to which topographic maps were usually put previous to the current decade, it might well be doubted whether so large a proportion of the resources at the command of the Survey were wisely given to this part of the work, and the question of ratio and proportion may be a pertinent one in any case, but it is necessary to a proper interpretation of the policy of the Survey to note that an important evolution of geological science has been in progress, and that topographic and physiographic factors now play a part in good geological work that they have never played before. Physiographic geology has had a new birth, and has taken an important place among the

essential branches of the science. Major Powell has himself, as an individual investigator, been one of the pioneers in this new departure, and the doctrine of the base-level, which we owe so largely to him, taken with its corollaries, constitutes one of the most important contributions of recent decades. In so far as the topographic work of the Survey has become an adjunct and antecedent of the new physiographic phases of geology, it merits the highest commendation. In so far as it has fallen short of this, it perhaps expresses the practical difficulty of at once rendering topographical work *geological*, a difficulty not to be wondered at since topographical work has been so largely regarded as a function of some other science than geology, some science in which the mere hypsometrical factors of relief, mechanically represented, have been chiefly considered instead of the genetic factors that give meaning to the topography. Until a generation of *geological* topographers can be trained up, topographic work cannot be expected to be other than mechanical and relatively expressionless. It may be questioned whether some of the topographic effort that has taken the *extensional* form might not better have taken an *intensive* form in the interest of transmuting mechanical topography into geological topography, or, in other words, the substitution of genetic expression for meaningless mechanicalism. But, withal, the great development of the topographical side of the Survey has been in the line of progress and the needed transformation in the fundamental nature of the work should grow out of it through persistence in the educative process already begun. We have no sympathy with the geologist who looks upon topographic work as an alien function to be performed by those whose profession does not lead them to know how topographic relief was produced or what it means, and who carps at the Survey for an alleged invasion of fields outside its domain.

Under Major Powell's administration, the physical and philosophical phases of the Survey have received a more marked impetus than the palæontological, though an able and active corps of palæontologists have always formed a large division of the

staff, and have made most important contributions. This ratio of development has been, perhaps, duly proportionate to the demands of the growing science, for the palæontological side of the governmental work was previously, we think, the more advanced and occupied a relatively larger part, and might well advance less rapidly and permit the physical wing to come abreast of it.

The administration has had a good degree of success in the very delicate and difficult task of coördinating the work of the general government with that of the states and in securing friendly and helpful coöperation. Very notably excellent results are being worked out by the joint effort in some cases.

Not to unduly lengthen this notice by dwelling upon other salient features of Major Powell's administration, suffice it to say that it has been marked by originality and boldness of conception, by good judgment in organization, by unusual skill in securing favorable legislative action, by large liberty to colleagues in the prosecution of their work and the publication of their results, by broad and comprehensive views of the functions of the Survey, and by great courage and tenacity of purpose in the endeavor to compass them.

The administration goes into the hands of a chosen colleague in whom the retiring Director will find a worthy successor. We predict for Mr. Walcott a brilliant administration. T. C. C.

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WE VERY much regret that the difficulties connected with the Missouri Geological Survey, to which we have once before made allusion, culminated recently in the abrupt termination of Mr. Winslow's directorship. This unfortunate result finds some mitigation, however, in the fact that the Survey is not altogether to be abandoned, as seemed at one time not unlikely, and that it has been placed in so excellent hands as those of Dr. C. R. Keyes, of the Iowa Geological Survey. It is also gratifying to learn that Mr. Winslow has been engaged to complete his report on the lead and zinc deposits, and that thus a very important

part of the Survey's work will be saved from loss, though the report will doubtless not be brought to the degree of completeness it would have reached under better conditions.

Dr. Keyes will be embarrassed at the outset by severe financial limitations, but we trust that his abilities and tact will win a large success in the end.

T. C. C.